

## THE SAW-WHET OWL OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS.

BY J. H. FLEMING.

LYING off the coast of British Columbia to the south of the Alaska boundary, the Queen Charlotte Islands have been investigated by naturalists in recent years, but seemingly without exhausting the possibilities of the interesting fauna. When Mr. Wilfred H. Osgood published in 1901, his account of the fauna of these islands, he described a Saw-whet Owl as *Nyctala acadica scotæ*,<sup>1</sup> basing the name on a single specimen collected in 1896, by the Rev. J. H. Keen, at Masset on Graham Island.<sup>2</sup> The differences noted between this form and true *acadica* were slight, but Mr. Osgood concluded that the birds of the humid Pacific coast region belonged to his new form and called it the North-west Saw-whet Owl, it was admitted to the 'A. O. U. Check-List,' with the range as "Puget Sound region, north to the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia."<sup>3</sup> Thus the matter remained till 1914, when Mr. Ridgway in part six of 'The Birds of Middle and North America,' page 629, refused to recognize *scotæ*, and referred all the Saw-whets of North America to *acadica*, giving his reasons as follows. "The only peculiarities that I am able to observe in the type of *Nyctala acadica scotæ* consist in the deep ochreous buff auricular region and more reddish brown of the pileum; but I am of the opinion that these characters will not prove constant when more specimens from the Queen Charlotte Islands have been examined."

With these facts in mind I was surprised when Mr. J. A. Munro of Okanagan Landing, B. C., sent me word that he had four Saw-whet Owls from Graham Island that differed from any he had previously seen in British Columbia, these birds are now before me together with Osgood's type of *scotæ*, this type, and a Mexican skin have been lent to me by the Biological Survey through Mr. E. W. Nelson; besides these, the U. S. National Museum through Dr. C. W.

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<sup>1</sup> North American Fauna, 21, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Type, ♂ ad. Biological Survey, No. 168171.

<sup>3</sup> Auk, 1902, p. 319.

Richmond has allowed me the use of four skins from the Pacific coast; and Mr. P. A. Taverner has sent me two skins from the Victoria Memorial Museum, Ottawa; these with fourteen Ontario skins from my own collection will be used in discussing the relationship between the type of *scotaxa* and the other Queen Charlotte Island birds. Three of these are adult females, taken on the following dates in 1915, September 19, October 20, November 5, the fourth a juvenile male taken June 18.

An adult female (September 19) is colored as follows, underneath — between sayal brown<sup>1</sup> and tawny olive, the usual streaks are prouts brown, the whole producing a deep cinnamon effect; the superciliaries cinnamon buff, becoming clove brown on the ear coverts; the tarsi and toes are cinnamon buff; above — clove brown uniform except for the spots on the lower hind neck, which are cinnamon buff, the feathers of the forehead only with a few shaft streaks of the same color; the tail darker than the back, the usual spots are white, small, and often only present on the inner web and each feather has a narrow white tip; the wings are like the tail but edged with prouts brown, the spots on the outer edges of the primaries are few, small, and are colored from cinnamon buff to lighter; the greater coverts have one spot of white visible, with smaller concealed ones, the spots on the secondaries are nearly white; the under wing coverts and bend of the wing are cinnamon buff. The October female is like the September one, but the November female is darker beneath, the prouts brown streaks are wider.

That the plumage just described is not sexual, is I think, proved by the juvenile male (in the so-called Kirtland's Owl stage) this is much darker everywhere, except for the white superciliaries, than an Ontario juvenile male of May 15. Above including the head uniform clove brown much darker even than the adult (almost sooty black), superciliary region and anterior portion of forehead clear white, the feathers of the latter bordered with clove brown, the ear coverts almost black; beneath — fore neck and breast clove brown, a little lighter in the middle; abdomen clear sayal brown; wings and tail as in the adult; tarsi sayal brown, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ridgway, *Nomenclature of Colors*, 1912, is used throughout.

toes only partially feathered. The Ontario bird is natal brown above and on the breast, the abdomen cinnamon buff, the ear-coverts fuscous, superciliaries white, but not so clear as in the Queen Charlotte Island bird.

The type of *scotæa* is a very different bird from the adult females just described, and differs from comparable mainland specimens sufficiently to suggest that it might belong to a race subject to dioromatism. The reddish brown of the pileum and back is pronounced and forms a band across the interscapular region, this depth of color is only approached by a bird from Querátero, Mexico,<sup>1</sup> and is much brighter than a male from Victoria, B. C.,<sup>2</sup> which in turn can be matched by Ontario birds; the auricular region in the type of *scotæa* is much more ochreous buff than either the Victoria or Mexican birds, and is not matched by any other birds before me; the tarsi and toes are cinnamon buff as in the dark females, while in the Mexican bird the toes are white and the tarsi only partially ochreous buff.

That the type of the North-west Saw-whet Owl is a stray, and does not represent the resident Queen Charlotte Island form is possible, though, as I have pointed out, it differs from mainland birds I have been able to compare it with, but against it are four birds that undoubtedly belong to a dark race, and if it should prove that the type of *scotæa* is not the light phase of this race the resident bird on the Queen Charlotte Islands would be without a name in which case I propose that it be called after Captain Allen Brooks, who has done so much for British Columbia ornithology.

### ***Cryptoglaux acadica brooksi.***

*Type.*— ♀ ad., Graham Island, Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia. September 19, 1915. No. 24629, collection of J. H. Fleming.

Saw-whet Owls from the Pacific Slope of British Columbia and Washington are ruddy brown in tone and these can be matched in my Ontario series, but Mr. Ridgway refers to a more grayish brown bird from the Rocky Mountain region, which may possibly

<sup>1</sup> ♂ ad. Sept. 10, 1896, Biological Survey, No. 155718.

<sup>2</sup> Feb. 29, 1893, U. S. Nat. Mus. No. 153206.

belong to a recognizable race, one bird from Rocklyn, Lincoln Co., Washington,<sup>1</sup> and one from Alix, Lacombe Co., Alberta,<sup>2</sup> are gray when compared with Ontario birds, and a series of inter-mountain birds might repay examination. Little can be deduced from measurements in the series before me, the Queen Charlotte Island birds are large, the wing averaging 5.53 in. in the three females, while five Ontario females average 5.40 in.

NOTE.— Since the above was written I have examined two more of the dark race, one of them a male.

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### A NEW FORM OF *CHLOËPHAGA HYBRIDA*.

BY JOHN C. PHILLIPS.

WHILE on an expedition to the Falkland Islands in the interest of the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy in 1915-16 Mr. W. S. Brooks obtained a series of *Chloëphaga hybrida* from West Falkland. This island form is larger in its several measurements than birds from the Straits of Magellan, and seems to be worthy of separation. It may be known as

#### *Chloëphaga hybrida malvinarum* subsp. nov.

*Type* from Port Stephens, West Falkland Isle. No. 70476 M. C. Z., adult ♂ collected 13th December, 1915, by W. Sprague Brooks.

*Characters* similar to *C. hybrida hybrida* from Patagonia and the Straits of Magellan, but larger, especially in length, depth and breadth of culmen. Pileum in the females, paler and more grayish; drab to light drab (Ridgway, 1912), instead of cinnamon brown. This character holds good for all five of the Falkland Island females and for the M. C. Z. series from the Straits of Magellan region.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan. 1910, Vic. Memor. Mus. No. 5842.

<sup>2</sup> ♀ ad. Dec. 1914, Vic. Memor. Mus. No. 8730